

2010

# Two Times Ten: Celebrating 20 Years of the Maine Arts Commission's Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program. 2010

Maine Arts Commission

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## Recommended Citation

Maine Arts Commission, "Two Times Ten: Celebrating 20 Years of the Maine Arts Commission's Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program. 2010" (2010). *Arts Commission Documents*. Paper 3.  
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# 2x10

TWO TIMES TEN

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF THE MAINE ARTS COMMISSION'S  
TRADITIONAL ARTS APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM





**LEFT TO RIGHT , TOP TO BOTTOM:**

Master Penobscot basketmakers Madeline and Billy Shay, left, with apprentice Barry Dana.  
Photo by Cedric Chatterley

Passamaquoddy basket-maker Gal Frey. Photo by Peggy McKenna

Cambodian wedding, Portland. Photo by Charlotte Agell

Basket by Paula Thorne. Photo by Peter Dembski

Angela Barnes, Master Passamaquoddy basketmaker, right, with Jodi Mcphail, apprentice.  
Photo by Cedric Chatterley

Basket by Molly Neptune Parker. Photo by Peter Dembski

Doris Chapman, Master Passamaquoddy basketmaker. Photo by Cedric Chatterley

Master Acadian singer Ida Roy with Sarah Roy, apprentice. Photo by Cedric Chatterley

Master Micmac wood-carver Wilfred Sanipass with John Philbrook, apprentice.  
Photo by Cedric Chatterley

Basket by Paula Thorne. Photo by Peter Dembski

Theresa Gardner, Master Passamaquoddy basketmaker, right, with Erin Barnes, apprentice.  
Photo by Cedric Chatterley

Master Passamaquoddy basketmaker Sylvia Gabriel. Photo by Cedric Chatterley

Master Passamaquoddy basketmaker Theresa Gardner's hands. Photo by Cedric Chatterley

Jeremy Frey, left, Gal Frey, center, Gabriel Frey, right. Photo by Peggy McKenna

Thomas Cote with Ellyzabeth S. Bencivenga apprentice. Photo by Peter Dembski

Basket by Jeremy Frey. Photo by Peggy McKenna

**FRONT COVER:**

Detail of basket by Molly Neptune Parker. Photo by Peter Dembski





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TWO TIMES TEN

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF THE MAINE ARTS COMMISSION'S

TRADITIONAL ARTS APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

"The Maine Arts Commission is enormously proud of its long-standing support for traditional arts in Maine, and in 2010 we celebrate the 20th anniversary of one of the agency's foremost traditional arts programs.

"The Maine Arts Commission's Traditional Arts Apprenticeship program has enabled the traditional arts to continue to be passed down through the generations. For those of us who have worked at the Maine Arts Commission over the last 20 years, it has been a great privilege and joy to meet and learn from our rich abundance of tradition bearing masters and their apprentices."

**Donna McNeil**

Director, Maine Arts Commission

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Quebecois wood carving, Franco-American fiddling, Wabanaki basket-making—every community has cultural traditions worth preserving. These arts are passed down informally, face-to-face, from elder to youth, master to apprentice. Honoring this heritage, the Maine Arts Commission began the Traditional Arts Apprenticeship program in 1990 with the generous support from the National Endowment for the Arts, Folk and Traditional Arts program.

Now in its 20th year, the Traditional Arts Apprenticeship program has supported over 100 apprenticeships. Based on experience and commitment to their art, master artists select an apprentice to teach for an extended period of time, usually a year. More than just one-on-one instruction, apprenticeships help communities maintain their cultural traditions. Often recognized as the ones who are "doing it right," traditional artists draw on a complex set of skills acquired over a lifetime of practice. Such mastery calls for a deep understanding of natural materials, place and cultural practices.

Two×Ten features 10 profiles of master artists and their apprentices who have generously given their time and expertise. Whether it's at the kitchen table, in the woods or on a dance floor, each apprenticeship artfully balances skill, creativity and tradition. Together, these masters and their apprentices are part of our living artistic heritage, reminding us all of the many creative ways to work and live in Maine.

**Kathleen Mundell**

Traditional Arts Specialist

# Watie Akins, Penobscot Drummer and Singer

APPRENTICE: JAMES NEPTUNE



Apprentice James Neptune (left) with Watie Akins (right). Photo by Peter Dembski

"Among all the indigenous peoples of the world, the drum is the center of all songs. The sound of the drum brings excitement, strength and completeness to the songs. It is Mother Earth's heartbeat giving her approval to those living upon her.

I was born on the Penobscot Reservation at Panawampskeag, now called Indian Island, Maine. As a child, I participated in many community pageants and performed in some shows on the tribal stage. When I moved back to the reservation 30 years ago, I relearned the old pageant music and began to use the hand drum and shaker. Since returning to Maine, I yearned to know

more of my culture and focused my interests in that direction. One aspect of my culture that spoke to me was the music, and I have concentrated on this knowledge exclusively for nearly eight years... It seems like such a small thing, but it strengthens the culture and keeps the traditional songs alive!"

—Watie Akins

## Clara Neptune Keezer, Passamaquoddy Basketmaker

APPRENTICES: PAUL "ROCKY" KEEZER, CYRIL FRANCIS, M. LOLA-NICHOLAS, KENNY KEEZER



Cyril Francis, left, with Clara Neptune Keezer. Photo by Jere DeWaters

"It pleases me to be able to teach this valuable art of basket-making to those who are willing to learn. I have to say that the best award I am thankful for is the knowledge my mom and grandmas gave me while growing up."—Clara Neptune Keezer

The intricate and overlapping relationships of elder and novice, parent and child, friend and neighbors, are constantly at play as techniques and creative ideas are exchanged through apprenticeships. A recognized master in the art of Passamaquoddy fancy ash and sweetgrass basket-making, Clara Neptune Keezer has helped shape a whole new generation of basketmakers. Born

into the tradition, at the Passamaquoddy community in Pleasant Point, Clara Keezer's grandparents and great-grandparents were all gifted sweetgrass and ash basketmakers. A master teacher in the Traditional Arts Apprenticeship program for over 15 years, Clara was awarded a National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in 2002.

## Thomas Cote, Acadian Wood Carving

APPRENTICES: JESSICA STACKHOUSE, TRACI WEATHERSHED, ELLYZABETH S. BENCIVENGA



Thomas Cote holding a carved wooden chain. Photo by Peter Dembski

"I want to teach apprentices that carvers have a tradition of dealing with the shaping of dull, common, and ordinary things into objects of interest and value using raw materials to enrich the lives of family and friends. This was an important part of the Acadians' tradition.

Carvers made items that were useful for everyday living from spoons to cookie boards to molding used in homes. They also made items that were inspirational, like the carved altars in the local churches that depicted local saints and religious figures. I hope to feed my apprentices' enthusiasm for their cultural

heritage through this craft and to teach a love of the natural world. I want my apprentices to be inspired by the same types of environment that inspired the four generations of carvers before them." —Thomas Cote





Cynthia Larock and Benoit Bourque dancing. Photo by Jere DeWaters

## Benoit Bourque, Quebecois Step Dancing

APPRENTICE : CYNTHIA LAROCK

## Cynthia Larock, Quebecois Step Dancing

APPRENTICES: GABRIEL JACQUES, JESSIE GAGNE-HALL,  
DONNA CASAVANT



Cynthia Larock with apprentice Gabriel Jacques

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**"**t was a discovery. This is the stuff of my home community, Lewiston, Maine. Percussive dance is like a language where you have distinctive dialects.

I see it like preserving a language. I think it's valuable for the Franco-American community to take notice of it and appreciate this heritage. My growth as a developing artist was immeasurably enhanced by my work with Benoit Bourque. I am now proficient enough so that I can perform and teach it as well, and now I am surrounded by a solid core of step dance compatriots."  
—Cynthia Larock, 1994

Through apprenticeship, traditions that might have disappeared find new teachers and audiences. In the early days of the Traditional Arts Apprenticeship program, Cynthia Larock apprenticed with master French-Canadian step dancer Benoit Bourque. Committed to sharing with others what she has learned, Cynthia is now organizing community dances for the Franco-American community and is teaching her own apprentices.





Master Penobscot basketmakers Madeline and Billy Shay. Photo by Cedric Chatterley.

## Madeline Tomer Shay, Penobscot Basket-Making

APPRENTICES: THERESA SECORD, CAROL DANA, BARRY DANA

## Theresa Secord, Penobscot Basket-Making

APPRENTICES: JILL TOMPKINS SHIBLES, JULIA NEPTUNE DANA, SUSAN HAMMOND, JENNIFER NEPTUNE, BETSY TANNIAN, SHANNON SECORD, ERICA MENARD



Shannon Secord, left, with Theresa Secord, right. Photo by Peter Dembski

**T**he Traditional Arts Apprenticeship program is a catalyst for many of us who are continuing the work. As an apprentice to Madeline Tomer Shay in 1990, I first became aware that after hundreds, perhaps thousands of years, our basket-making traditions were slipping away. At that time, I was one of only a dozen Maine Indians younger than the age of 50 who were practicing the tradition. Then, in 1993, Madeline Shay, my teacher, died. It was then that I began my own teaching in the program, determined not to watch traditional basket-making die." —Theresa Secord

Once an apprentice to the renowned Penobscot basketmaker Madeline Tomer Shay, Theresa Secord has gone on to be a master in her own right. Using blocks, molds and tools passed down from her great-grandmother, she continues to make beautiful

ash and sweetgrass fancy baskets. Theresa Secord is also the founding Executive Director of the Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance, an intertribal organization dedicated to the preservation of sweetgrass and brown ash basketry.



## Don Roy, Franco Fiddling

APPRENTICES: ERICA BROWN, MATHEW LAMARE, MARY ELLEN ROLLINS



Don Roy

**A**t the age of 15, Don Roy would often visit his uncle, Lucien Mathieu, the talented Franco fiddler. Mathieu would teach him a tune or two and let him borrow one of his fiddles so he could play music at family gatherings.

Today, Don Roy is considered the "dean" of New England Franco fiddling and is the recipient of many awards including an Individual Artist Fellowship from the Maine Arts Commission.

He has gone on to teach a whole new generation of Maine fiddlers including Erica Brown who is now teaching her own apprentices.

## Pirun Sen, Cambodian Music

APPRENTICES: ANTHONY CHHEM, REBECCA SEN



Pirun Sen with Samaki Ensemble. Photo by Jere DeWaters

**"We** can do nothing without music." —Pirun Sen

As dedicated teachers, community historians and cultural advocates, master artists connect to their communities in multiple ways. Pirun Sen, who works for Portland's Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Programs, has always been an advocate for the cultural traditions of the Cambodian community of Portland. Prior to the Traditional Arts Apprenticeship program, there were very few

opportunities to learn Khmer classical music. The program made it possible for Pirun Sen to travel to Lowell, Massachusetts, to study with master Cambodian musicians Phan Bin and Chhay Kim. Pirun Sen has gone on to teach his own apprentices and helped organize the Samaki Ensemble, a musical group that performs regularly at Cambodian social and cultural events.



## Normand Gagnon, Quebecois Button Accordion

APPRENTICES: VALERIE SMITH, LEROY LEBLANC, STEVE MUISE, MICHEL GIASSON



Normand Gagnon with apprentice Valerie Smith. Photo by Jere DeWaters

Normand Gagnon. Photo by Darren Setlow

**A**s symbols of family heritage, cultural identity and artistic inheritance, traditional arts have much meaning for those who continue to practice them. Through apprenticeship, the master brings this heritage to life. For the past two decades, Normand Gagnon has taught several apprentices button accordion playing. Drawing on his rich repertoire of French-Canadian music, Normand is an important part of the Rumford community.

"Young people of Franco heritage do not seem to get the same exposure to this music as did those of the older generations.

Normand Gagnon is a skilled musician and a direct connection to French culture and to the music." —Valerie Smith

## Molly Neptune Parker, Passamaquoddy Basket-Making

APPRENTICES: CHRISTOPHER NEPTUNE, GEORGE NEPTUNE



George and Molly Neptune Parker working together. Photo by Peter Dembski

**A**pprenticeships enliven communities by reshaping old forms into contemporary life. In the hands of the next generation, these traditions are passed on and strengthen an entire community's cultural heritage.

"Basket-making for me is about innovation and creativity within the context of a traditional art form. The functionality, the materials and the shapes have been a legacy for each generation. I honor that legacy and believe I have a responsibility to continue

it, basing it always on our traditions and knowledge of literally thousands of years. Basket-making is an art that I believe I was born to do, much as my ancestors have done for thousands of years." —Molly Neptune Parker

## Sylvia Gabriel, Passamaquoddy Basket-Making

APPRENTICES: NIKIA GABRIEL, JESSIE BOSTON, MARY K. DOWNING,  
MAE ANN POLCHES, GAL FREY



Master Passamaquoddy basketmaker Sylvia Gabriel, left, with Gal Frey, apprentice. Photo by Cedric Chatterley

"I want to teach what my mother and grandmother taught me; neatness and good construction. These are qualities of prime importance."—Sylvia Gabriel

The Traditional Arts Apprenticeship program acts as a kind of aquifer for traditional culture, nourishing elders and new generations of artists. Master Passamaquoddy basketmaker Sylvia Gabriel taught many apprentices including Gal Frey, who

in turn taught her sons Gabriel and Jeremy Frey. Continuing on their family heritage of basket-making, both young men are gifted traditional artists in their own right.



## Maine Arts Commission Traditional Arts Apprenticeships

Watie J. Akins, Penobscot Music  
James Neptune, Apprentice

Janice Attean, Penobscot Basketry  
Esther Attean, Apprentice

Angela Barnes, Passamaquoddy Basket-making  
Jodi Mcphail & Daryl McPhail, Apprentices

Phan Bin, Cambodian Music  
Pirun Sen, Apprentice

Greg Boardman, Franco Music  
Jasmine Chick, Apprentice

Benoit Bourque, Quebecois Step Dancing  
Cynthia Larock, Apprentice

Eric Brown, Franco Fiddling  
Christie Michaud, Apprentice

Dianne Campbell, Passamaquoddy Basketmaking  
Nina Levesque & Carey Hood, Apprentices

Steve Cayard, Birch Bark Canoe-Making  
David Moses Bridges, Apprentice

Doris Chapman, Passamaquoddy Basketmaking  
Keya & Katie Smiley, Apprentices

John Connors, Batteaux Building  
Dave Wylie & Chase Jackson, Apprentices

Thomas Cote, Acadian Wood Carving  
Jessica Stackhouse, Traci Weathershed,  
Ellyzabeth S. Bencivenga, Apprentices

Eunice Crowley, Penobscot Basket-Making  
Carol Dana, Apprentice

Pamela Cunningham, Penobscot Basket-Making  
Nichole & Ruth Johnson, Apprentices

Joan M. Dana, Wabanaki Bead Working & Regalia  
S. Dana & B. Libby, Apprentices

Louis D. Dana, Wabanaki Basket-Making  
Priscilla Dana, Apprentice

Barbara D. Francis, Penobscot Basket-Making  
David Daigle, Jr. & Carol Binette

Clare B. Gabriel, Passamaquoddy Basket-Making  
Roberta Richter & Joyce Tomah

Mary Mitchell Gabriel, Passamaquoddy Basket-Making  
Lucille Mary Moore, Apprentice

Sylvia Gabriel, Passamaquoddy Basket-Making  
Nikia Gabriel, Jessie Boston, Mary K. Downing, Mae  
Ann Polches & Gal Frey, Apprentices

Normand Gagnon, Franco Button-box Accordion  
Valerie Smith, Leroy LeBlanc, Steve Muise, Michel Giasson,  
Apprentices

Theresa Neptune Gardner, Passamaquoddy Basket-Making  
Elizabeth Gardner, Nancy Socotomah, Shirley Cogswell,  
Erin Barnes, Apprentices

Aron Griffith, Maliseet Birch bark work  
Perla Beauford, Apprentice

Ben Guilmette, Franco Fiddling  
Daniel & Stephen Guillemette, Tiwill Huvall, Veronica  
Delcourt-Branch, Apprentices

Clara Neptune Keezer, Passamaquoddy Basket-Making  
Paul "Rocky" Keezer, Cyril Francis, A. Keezer, M. Lola-  
Nicholas, Kenny Keezer, Apprentices

Paul Keezer, Passamaquoddy Basket-Making  
Elizabeth Neptune, Larry Robichaud, Apprentices

Bud Kluchnik, Canadian Head Yoke-Making  
Shawn O'Donnel, Apprentice

Rachel LeBlanc, Acadian Singing  
Lucie Ouellette, Lila Cancelarich, Apprentices

Cynthia LaRock, Franco Dancing  
Donna Casavant, Gabriel Jacques, Jessie Gagne-Hall,  
Apprentices

Ila LeGasse, Wabanaki Basket-Making  
Jeanine Marie Martinez, Apprentice

Fred Legere, Franco Music  
Adele St. Pierre, Joshua Anchors, Apprentices

Florence Rose Martin, Franco Singing  
Andrew Cyr, Apprentice

Paul James Martin, Wabanaki Basket-Making  
Richard Nadeau, Apprentice

Alberta Meader, Wabanaki Basket-Making  
I. Nicola, A. Paul, N. Loring, Apprentices

Delia Mitchell, Passamaquoddy Music  
Tina Dana, Apprentice

Oscar Mokeme, Nigerian Healing Arts  
Obi Mokeme, Apprentice

Peter Neptune, Passamaquoddy Basket-Making  
Victoria Neptune, John Francis, Apprentices

Stan Neptune, Penobscot Root Club Carving  
Joe Neptune, Apprentice

Christine Nicholas, Penobscot Basket-Making  
Barbara Neptune, Apprentice

Fredrick B. Nicola, Sr., Penobscot Basket-Making  
Frederick B. Nicola, Jr., Apprentice

Jerry Pardilla, Penobscot Music  
John Bear Mitchell, Apprentice

Molly Neptune Parker, Passamaquoddy Basket-Making  
Christopher & George Neptune, Apprentices

Dominic Polchies, Wabanaki Basket-Making  
Robert Polchies, Apprentice

Douglas Protsik, Fiddling  
Milo Stanley, Apprentice

Indhra Rajashekar, Bharathanatyam Indian Dance  
Rangapriya Rajashekar, Apprentice

Rodney C. Richard, Sr., Wood Carving  
Butch Richard, Apprentice

Don Roy, Franco Fiddling  
Erica Brown, Mathew Lamare, Mary Ellen Rollins,  
Apprentices

Ida Roy, Acadian Singing  
Kenneth & Sarah Lee Roy, Apprentices

Teresa Sabatis, Beading  
Sally Lindsay, Apprentice

Mary & Donald Sanipass, Micmac Basket-Making  
Betty J. Phillips, Ethel Gotte, Apprentices

Wilfred Sanipass, Micmac Wood Carving  
John Philbrook, Apprentice

Theresa Secord, Penobscot Basket-Making  
Jill Tompkins Shibles, Julia Neptune Dana, Susan  
Hammond, Jennifer Neptune, B. Tannian, Shannon  
Secord, Apprentices

Pirun Sen, Cambodian Music  
Rebecca Sen, Anthony C. Chen, Apprentices

Caron Shay, Penobscot Basket-Making  
Briana Randall, Apprentice

Lawrence Shay, Penobscot Basket-Making  
Caron Shay, Belinda Cote, Apprentices

Madeline Shay, Penobscot Basket-Making  
Theresa Secord, Carol Dana, Barry Dana, Apprentices

Richard Silliboy, Micmac Basket-Making  
Valentine Polchies, Apprentice

Blanch M. Sockabasin, Passamaquoddy Singing

Lola J. Sockabasin, Passamaquoddy Wood Carving  
Glenna Levesque, Apprentice

David Surette, Acadian, Quebecois & Celtic music  
Robert Sylvain, Apprentice

Brian J. Theriault, Snowshoe-Making  
Glen Labbe, Apprentice

Paula Thorne, Penobscot Basket-Making  
Emily Bell, Apprentice

Walter James Tomah, Maliseet Basket-Making  
Fred Tomah, Apprentice

Bertha Voisine, Acadian Rug-making  
7 apprentices sponsored by Maine Acadian Heritage  
Council

Mary Jane Zumbrunnen, Micmac Basket-Making  
Marilyn Francis, Roxanne Shaw, Gail Engstrom,  
Apprentices





**LEFT TO RIGHT , TOP TO BOTTOM:**

Shannon Secord, making a sweetgrass basket. Photo by Peter Dembski

Close-up of Watie Akin's drum. Photo by Peter Dembski

Master Passamaquoddy basketmaker Clara Keezer. Photo by Cedric Chatterley

Cynthia Larock, left, dancing with Benoit Bourque. Photo by Jere DeWaters

Don Roy. Photo by Darren Setlow

Pirun Sen. Photo by Jere DeWaters

Normand Gagnon. Photo by Jere DeWaters

Close-up of Molly Neptune Parker. Photo by Peter Dembski

Basket by Molly Neptune Parker. Photo by Peter Dembski

Basket by Paula Thorne. Photo by Peter Dembski

Close-up of Molly Neptune Parker's basket. Photo by Peter Dembski

Master Passamaquoddy basketmaker Clara Keezer. Photo by Cedric Chatterley

Basket by Theresa Secord. Photo by Peter Dembski

Master Passamaquoddy basketmaker Dianne Campbell. Photo by Cedric Chatterley

Normand Gagnon. Photo Darren Setlow

George Neptune. Photo by Peter Dembski





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Guidelines and information on the Traditional Arts Apprenticeship program are available:

[www.mainearts.com](http://www.mainearts.com)

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